

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 723

By McDaniel

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Commander William Robert Anderson, U. S. Navy (Ret) for laudable service to the people of the United States and the state of Tennessee.

WHEREAS, the state of Tennessee has a long and storied history forged in large part by the efforts of certain of her sons and daughters whose extraordinary lives have made significant impressions in the account of our common life as a people; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should salute those persons who through their heroic actions and professional efforts have distinguished themselves as national, state and community leaders of whom we can all be proud; and

WHEREAS, one such noteworthy person is Commander William Robert Anderson, U. S. Navy (Ret), who as a naval officer, Director of the National Service Corps, and four-term United States Representative from the Sixth Congressional District in Tennessee, has made an indelible mark upon the history of his state and nation; and

WHEREAS, William R. Anderson was born June 17, 1921 in Bakersville Tennessee to local businessman and farmer David H. Anderson and his wife, Mary M. Anderson; as a child Bill Anderson demonstrated remarkable mechanical ability, turning out various items like lawn

chairs and tables; he also made partially successful efforts at constructing a Ferris Wheel and a submarine converted from a rowboat; and

WHEREAS, Bill Anderson was treated as an adult by his father at an early age, and assisted his father by directing the operations of the family lumbermill and filling lumber orders; and

WHEREAS, Bill attended public schools in Waynesboro, Tennessee, but at the urging of his father, asked his local congressman for an appointment to the U. S. Naval Academy. Having secured that promise he completed high school in three years and entered Columbia Military Academy to prepare himself for the requisite examinations for admission to the U. S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland; and

WHEREAS, while midshipman Anderson was at Annapolis, World War II began and he found himself in an accelerated class; following graduation in 1942, he and his class made a voyage on a battleship; and

WHEREAS, following his maiden voyage, Mr. Anderson elected to attend submarine school, and from October 1942 to June 1943 he was assigned to the USS Tarpon as Communications Officer and First Lieutenant; he served on eleven war patrols on the Tarpon, the Narwhal and the Trutta, winning commendations and a Bronze Star; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Anderson then transferred to the USS Sarda, where he served as Engineer and later as Executive Officer; following duty as an instructor, he assumed his first command on the USS Wahoo, which saw service during the Korean War; and

WHEREAS, two years later Mr. Anderson assumed direction of the Tactical Department of the U. S. Submarine School in New London, Connecticut; soon thereafter, he came to the attention of U. S. Naval engineering legend and father of the nuclear submarine, Hyman G. Rickover. In 1956 Anderson was summoned to Rickover's office for an interview and was brought into the nuclear submarine program; he designed what would become the core study program of a nuclear submarine commander; and

WHEREAS, on April 30, 1957, Captain William R. Anderson was given command of the USS Nautilus, the navy's first nuclear powered submarine; after opening sealed Top Secret orders, he learned that he was to proceed to Portland, England, by a route which would take the vessel under the arctic ice pack; and

WHEREAS, assuming command of the vessel on June 1957, Captain Anderson faced the problem of fitting the Nautilus with navigational equipment that would function in proximity to magnetic north, and learning how to navigate over the unknown topography of the polar seabed and the equally unknown lower surface of the arctic ice pack; and

WHEREAS, following an unsuccessful attempt in 1957, and a second unsuccessful attempt in north Pacific and Alaskan waters in June of 1958, the Nautilus set sail from Pearl Harbor toward Alaska and the Bering Strait on July 23, 1958; building upon valuable information learned from the earlier efforts, the Nautilus reached 90 degrees north - the North Pole - on August 3, 1958; and

WHEREAS, upon reaching a place to surface a little further to the east, Captain Anderson transmitted a three-word Top Secret message to the Pentagon - "Nautilus 90 North"; the news was soon spread worldwide and the crew was honored with a special message from President Eisenhower; and

WHEREAS, Captain Anderson was transported off the Nautilus by helicopter to meet the President and First Lady and Admiral Rickover; he later rejoined his crew at Portland, England and sailed with them to port at New York where they were honored with a tickertape parade; and

WHEREAS, President Eisenhower later awarded Commander Anderson the Legion of Merit. The citation stated:

"Under the intrepid leadership, Nautilus pioneered a submerged sea lane between the eastern and western hemispheres. This points the way for future exploration and possible use of this route by nuclear powered cargo submarines as a

new commercial seaway.....Commander Anderson's leadership, skilled application of professional knowledge, and courage were in keeping with the highest traditions of the armed forces of the United States"; and

WHEREAS, Commander Anderson continued his naval career, serving as a special assistant to Secretaries of the Navy William B. Franke, John Connally and Fred Korth; President John F. Kennedy named him Director of the National Service Corps, which came to be known as the Domestic Peace Corps; and

WHEREAS, declining a candidacy for Governor of Tennessee in 1960, Commander Anderson returned to his home state following his retirement from the Navy and was elected to four successive terms as U. S. Representative from Tennessee's 6th Congressional District; he has authored a number of books, including "Nautilus 90 North" which documented the crew's voyage and the many problems encountered; and

WHEREAS, William R. Anderson epitomizes the spirit and commitment that is characteristic of a true Tennessean; his journey was, for its day, one of the greatest accomplishments of mankind and is still regarded as one of the greatest moments in U. S. Naval history. Commander Anderson has unfailingly credited the men who served under him, saying, "I had the best ship and the best crew anyone could ever want. All you have to do is look at the men's achievements since their tour with the Nautilus"; and

WHEREAS, William R. Anderson has enjoyed the love and encouragement of his wife, the former Yvonne (Bonny) Etzel and sons Michael and William R., Jr. during his remarkable career; and

WHEREAS, this General Assembly finds it appropriate to pause in its deliberations to acknowledge the remarkable achievements of this outstanding Naval Officer, U. S. Congressman and courageous human being, and applaud him for his dedication to his country, the state of Tennessee and its citizens; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, That we hereby honor and commend William Robert Anderson for his heroic and outstanding service to the United States of America and to the state of Tennessee and extend to him our best wishes for continued health and happiness.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.